

The Chief Petty Officers  
of the  
United States Navy

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### **The Chief Petty Officers of the United States Navy**

A major milestone and rewarding time in a young sailors career is be a Chief Petty Officer (CPO) in the United States Navy (U.S.N). It is the day in which a First Class Petty Officer (E-6) dons the uniform and is accepted into the CPO (E-7) community. A Chief Petty Officer is an enlisted pay grade E-7 (Noel, p63). A sailors dream is to one day be the "CHIEF".

On April 1, 2003 we celebrated the 110<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the creation of the Chief Petty Officer grade.

It is necessary that we look back to the Continental Navy to establish the foundation that led to the establishing of the CPO grade. During the revolutionary war, Jacob Wasbie, a cook serving onboard the ALFRED one of the first Continental Navy warships was promoted to CHIEF cook. Chief cook meant ships cook or senior cook, which was the official title at the time. This is the earliest example used of the term "CHIEF" (CPO heritage).

Prior to the establishment of the CPO grade, precedence by rating among the First Class Petty Officers was a way of life. Precedence among the First Class Petty Officers was established by the Commanding Officer of the ship in which they served. The Commanding Officer of the ship would designate a senior First Class Petty Officer to act as the Chief, the leader or supervisor within that rate. And this was the way of life for many years.

However, on April 1, 1893, the grade of the Chief Petty Officer was created. The question has often been asked: "Who was the first CPO?" The answer is simple there was no first CPO due to the fact that all rating that carried a First Class Petty Officer

from 1885 were automatically shifted to the CPO grade level.

Back then the Commanding Officer would recommend to the Board of Personnel to promote a First Class Petty Officer to the Chief Petty Officer grade. Today the selection process is a little different. The Commanding Officer still recommends the First Class Petty Officer for promotion in the Evaluation Report. The First Class Petty Officer takes an exam in January, the results of the exam come out in April/May of that year. If the First Class Petty Officer passes the exam, his/hers name goes before a board panel that convenes in July. Once the board is completed the results goes through the proper channels for approval. Congress then appoints the First Class Petty Officer to the grade of Chief Petty Officer and in August the list comes out with the newly selected CPO. A lengthier process, however more efficient in selecting the best of our sailors to become Chief Petty Officers.

The fouled anchor is the emblem of the rate of the Chief Petty Officer of the United States Navy. Attached to the golden anchor is a length of chain and the letters USN. To the novice, the anchor, chain and letters USN only identify a CPO in the U.S.N, but, to a Chief, these have a more noble and glorious meaning.'

The "U" stands for **Unity**, which reminds us of cooperation, maintaining harmony and continuity of purpose and action.

The "S" stands for **Service**, which reminds us of service to our God, our country and our Navy.

The "N" stands for **Navigation**, which reminds us to keep ourselves on a true course so that we may walk upright before God and man in our transactions with all mankind, but especially with our fellow Chiefs.

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The “**CHAIN**” is symbolic of flexibility and reminds us of the chain of life that we forge day by day and may it be forged with HONOR, COURAGE and COMMITMENT.

The “**ANCHOR**” is emblematic of the hope and glory of the fulfillment of all Gods promises to our souls. The golden precious ANCHOR by which we must be kept steadfast in faith and encouraged to abide in our proper station amidst the storm of temptation, affliction and persecution (U.S. Navy Chief).

In the Navy, we live by three words, our Navy core values: HONOR, COURAGE and COMMITMENT.

We **HONOR** our CPO heritage, the members of the CPO mess and our Navy by doing our absolute best in everything we do.

We show **COURAGE** by stepping up to the plate and taking a swing at the hard problems and issues of our sailors and our Navy.

We are **COMMITTED** to our sailors and our Navy to making a difference.

A Chief Petty Officer doesn’t earn his/her anchors once; a Chief Petty Officer earns his/hers anchors every day. Our Navy requires nothing less than the very best from its people. Our CPO today started out as young sailors working their way through the promotional aisles, each requiring harder effort, as the path became more rugged. The goal to be the “CHIEF” has always been a young sailors motivation for doing well, working hard and given their best.

For over 100 years the Chief Petty Officer community has provided guidance, leadership and set the standards for our Navy today and well into the 21st century.

Work Cited

Noel, John. Naval Terms Dictionary. Fifth edition, 1996.

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(<http://www.history.navy.mil/faqs/faq46-1.htm>)

U.S. Navy Chief Community. Navy Web Page

(<http://goatlocker.org/cpo.htm>)